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No 48

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Thompson

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On *Leucortaea* —

By *James Speer of Pennsylv*

passed March 23 1846.

1848

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An Essay on Leucorrhœa

The Medical Student, while attending Lectures, labours under difficulties extremely hostile to the performance of the task which is imposed upon him by the ordinances of the University. He is compelled, by one of its most inviolable laws, to present to its Professors, a thesis, from which they may, more competently judge, not only of his Medical, but also, of his Grammatical qualifications, previously to their conferring upon him the honors of the Institution. — The Student's time is, almost wholly, occupied with the Lectures; he must read by day & read by night;

— "*Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ*." —

He must reflect upon and examine himself on those subjects which they embrace: He is confined to the duty of hearing what others say, and of reading what others have written: he has no time to devote to pleasing speculations upon any favourite subject, nor leisure to reduce to proper order those, which he may occasionally indulge: he has no means of putting to the test of

Journal of the Proceedings of the
General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church of the United States
at the City of New York
in the Year 1801

At a General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church of the United States
held at the City of New York
on the 1st day of October 1801
The following Resolutions
were adopted: That the
Assembly do hereby recommend
to the Synods and Presbyteries
that they do cause to be
published and distributed
among the people of this
country a tract containing
the substance of the
Confession of Faith and
the Shorter Catechism
of the Presbyterian Church
of the United States
as revised and approved
by the General Assembly
in the Year 1789.

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experiment any specious reasonings or Theories that he at times may adopt; and, were these obstacles ever removed, his juvenile years, his comparatively slender stock of knowledge, and his immature judgement, would, perhaps, be insurmountable objections to his engaging in this department of science:—His inexperience precludes, in a great degree, the collection of facts from observation, and he is, consequently, forced to transcribe and collocate, as he may think best, the opinions of his predecessors, and that, too, at a time, when, perhaps above all others, he would aspire to distinction amongst his brethren of the class. Of necessity, therefore, he cannot, by the nature of things, be expected to usher forth, with all the splendid formality of a professed author, or with all the fair promises of a promulgator of a new doctrine, any new or recondite hypotheses or opinions, tending either to subvert those fabric of doctrines, which have been sanctioned by the assent of ages, or to erect one more specious and plausible in their stead. Excluded, then, from all these sources of collecting the requisite materials, he searches anxiously for his subject; he finds one and adopts it; he contemplates and views it in all its bearings and relations; he congratulates himself on having a subject on which he expects to display his powers; he reflects more fully upon it; and discovers some parts which would necessarily lead to discussions, for which he feels himself not ~~adequately~~ prepared; and, not

obstructed, it is not uncommon for the *Fluxus Albus* to become more abundant and to be attended with more pain in the back, about the menstrual period. If a woman, who has *Leucorrhoea*, conceives, the discharge generally stops. In some cases, however, pregnancy produces a discharge of a glairy fluid, which it has been thought dangerous to check suddenly. Other women are subject to a similar discharge after any fatigue, but get easily rid of it, by rest and attention to cleanliness."

"The vaginal discharge" is, according to the same author, "attended with slighter effects, but the symptoms are similar in kind, with these differences, *viz.*, that menstruation does not make it disappear, and it continues during pregnancy, nay, is even increased, or sometimes brought on by it." — Burns' Midwifery, 5th Amer. Edit. p. 60, 61. &c.

With respect to the discharge which occurs in pregnancy, and which is derived solely, from the vagina, Dr. Gorman observes, that, "it is sometimes exceedingly profuse, and has very much the appearance as if it was occasioned by inflammation. It may then be occasioned by some extraordinary fulness of the part adjoining the uterus, or by more than usual irritation. It does not appear," continues our author, "that any bad consequences, either to the mother or the child, follow this complaint, or that it requires any particular treatment. Perhaps by the relaxation of these parts, which are to be dilated at the time of parturition,

they may then make less resistance, at least it is observed that
42 who have suffered much from this ~~disorder~~ symptom during
pregnancy, have easy labours."

In addition to the symptoms which I have already
enumerated, viz., the discharge, the colour and consistence
and fetor and acridity of the matter, I may mention, as
as pretty generally concomitant symptoms of the disease,
pain and a sensation of weakness in the back and loins;
smarting in micturition; dyspepsia and loss of appetite; debility;
paleness of the countenance; dejection of the spirits and disinclination
to motion; sometimes feverishness is present -

When the disease has continued a long time, and is very severe
both in its local and constitutional effects, prolapsus and
ulcerations of the uterus; dyspnoea; palpitations; faintings;
convulsions; abortions; anasarca or dropsical swellings; hectic
phthisis &c sometimes ensue and terminate the existence of the patient.

In cases which have proved fatal, dissection has shown
the uterus to be pale; flabby; relaxed; indurated; ulcerated;
covered with thick viscid mucus &c &c.

The causes of this disease, are excessive venery; frequent
abortions; difficult labours; excessive evacuations; pro-
fuse hemorrhagia; local injuries; use of warm enervating

drinks as tea; and, in fine, any thing that debilitates either loc-
ally or generally, may produce the disease. It, also, sometimes arises
from schirrus of the uterus; from polypus; prolapsus &c and has
been known to have originated from worms. — Some have
supposed this disease to be always local in its origin, or, that
the uterus is the part which is ~~always~~ first affected, and
that the general system becomes diseased merely from sympathy
with this important viscus. This, certainly, is, frequently, perhaps
even in a majority of instances, the case; but, that it is not
universally so, we have the respectable testimony of Dr. Thomas.
This excellent author declares that he has known, "delicate women
with lax fibres, who have moved from cold to warm cli-
mates, to be very apt to be attacked with it, without the party
having previously sustained any kind of injury."

On accurate observation it is found that women somewhat ad-
vanced in life, particularly those who have borne children are
most subject to Fluxus Albae. It is comparatively rare in young
unmarried girls. The sedentary; inactive; libidinous; weak;
relaxed, also those subject to irregularity of the catamenia, are
said to be particularly liable to this disease.

Gonorrhoea is the only disease with which Leucorrhoea
can be confounded. Indeed, these two diseases, are so analog-
ous in their symptoms and appearances as to preclude, sometimes

the possibility of a distinction. — By a close attention to the following symptoms, however, a distinction may, generally, be made. In Gonorrhoea the discharge is constant, but small in quantity; there is much ardor urinae; itching of the prepuce; swelling of the labia; increased inclination to venery; and, very frequently, an enlargement of the glands of the groin: — but, in Leucorrhoea, the discharge is irregular; in considerable quantities; and frequently comes away in clots or lumps; there is, generally, no swelling of the labia; itching &c &c.

The entire removal of this disease will be, at all times, a difficult matter, particularly when it is of long standing and accompanied with great acrimony of the discharges. But, notwithstanding however discouraging and hopeless the case may appear, it nevertheless, becomes the duty of the Physician, to attempt, with all the means in his power, not only the mitigation and palliation of the most urgent and distressing symptoms of the disease, but, also, to draw upon every resource of his art to effectuate its complete and perfect removal and eradication from the system.

On account of the foul state in which we generally find the stomach, in this disease, it would perhaps be most proper to commence the curative plan with an emetic. This remedy



is serviceable, not only by exciting an action on the stomach itself, by which it evacuates it of much foul matter and then by prepares it for the reception of other remedies, but, also, as Dr Thomas has well observed, by "making a revulsion of the humours from the inferior parts of the body", and, "likewise, by its exciting all the powers of the constitution to a more vigorous action." They, moreover, create a centrifugal tendency of the fluids, which, is, evidently, a prominent indication in the treatment. They may be repeated at any subsequent period of the disease, when occasion may require.

This being premised, and the stomach being in a proper condition, we may now enter upon the use of Tonics or Astringents, which, by exciting into a more vigorous action the general system, will, also, at the same time invigorate the relaxed and debilitated Uterus, and restore it to its healthy action. Among the Tonics which may be given, I shall mention some of the Chalybeates, Bitters, and the Mineral Acids.

As a Tonic, the Cinchona may be taken in any of its forms, as in substance, tincture or infusion. Or, it may be combined with the aqua calcis, in the proportion of two ounces of the former to two pounds of the latter, of which mixture a wine-glass-full may be given four or five times a day. This formula.



Having the time and perhaps the means of information on this point, he discards it in toto:—he takes ~~another~~ another and another, which, for similar reasons, he abandons, and, at last sits down disheartened, and submits to the humble task of copying, as a servile imitator, what has been said and written, perhaps a thousand times before.—

Influenced, therefore, by the above-mentioned circumstances, but, at the same time, not promising "any thing new on the subject," I have, at length, chosen Leucorrhoea for the subject of the following essay. I propose, then, giving a brief description of the nature, causes, effects, and, also, of the most approved plan of treating this disease, which, from the obstinacy and unmanageableness of its disposition, the loathsomeness of its nature, the difficulty of its cure, the formidable & disturbing diseases to which it may give rise, and, above all, the importance to the happiness and well-being of Society, of that sex, which, alone, it afflicts, becomes a subject of the deepest interest, and deserving of the attentive consideration of the virtuous and humane Physicians.—

Leucorrhoea consists of an irregular discharge from the vagina, of a fluid of a somewhat viscid consistence, and a whitish appearance, being, in fact, nothing else, than an increased secretion and excretion of the mucous fluids, with which the uterus and vagina are naturally supplied.—

In the commencement of the disease, the excreted matter

Handwritten text on a single page of aged paper. The text is written in a cursive script, likely from the 18th or 19th century. The page is numbered "12" in the top right corner. The handwriting is somewhat faded and the ink is dark. The paper shows signs of age, including slight discoloration and wear along the edges. The text is organized into several paragraphs, with some lines indented. The overall appearance is that of a historical document or a personal letter.

is recommended, by Dr. Chapman, as an excellent remedy in this disease.

The Tonic preparations of Iron are highly recommended, particularly the Rubig. Ferri or Carbonate of Iron. This may be given alone, or may sometimes be advantageously combined with alums. The Prussiate of Iron, I have known to produce the best effects, in that thin, serous discharge, which frequently occurs in the pregnant state ^{of women} of debilitated and worn out constitutions. For this purpose it was given in doses of 8 or 10 grs. three or four times a day.

Of the Bitters, Gentian, Columbo, Trassia &c are among the most efficacious, and may be used either alone, or combined with some astringent medicine.

The Astringents are celebrated as remedies in the treatment of this disease, although they have, like most other medicines, sometimes failed of effecting a cure. These medicines, acting by condensing and consolidating the living fibres, thereby imparting tone and strength, and being prompt in their effects, would seem, from these properties, to be particularly adapted to urgent cases, where their immediate operation is required. Those that have ^{been} most successfully used, are the Alum; Kino; Catechu; Sulphate of Zinc, &c. which



may be given in repeated doses during the day, until relief be obtained. The Uva Ursi was successfully used by Dr. Barton, both internally, in the form of powder, and, also, as an injection in the form of infusion. These medicines may be, sometimes, usefully combined with some of the Tonics mentioned above.

Diaphoretics are particularly recommended to excite a determination to the surface, and thus to divert, or remove the disease from the internal parts of the body. As a sudorific, antimonials with sassafrilla and warm drinks may be used; also Gowers Powder and James' Powder.

When the system is very much reduced, and the powers of life in a languishing condition, and urgent symptoms are present, the use of Stimulants and cordials becomes indispensibly necessary. In these cases the Tincture of Opium, wine, brandy, either &c will be found efficacious medicines.

The cold bath applied both locally and generally, is a very useful remedy, and is very frequently used as an efficacious Tonic.



The Terbinthinas have frequently been used with advantage in this disease. These medicines exert their principal effect on the urinary organs and poises, and, sympathetically, invigorate the action of the uterus. -- For this purpose the *Ol. Terbinthina*, has been highly recommended, in doses of from 15 to 20 drops three or four times a day. As the turpentine agree in the general property of exciting the action of the urinary organs, they may, perhaps, all, be sometimes, severally used with advantage in this disease.

Balsam Copaiba, has, also, acquired much reputation in the treatment of *Leucorrhoea*. This medicine, which has succeeded after all other remedies had failed, is to be given in doses of 30 or 40 drops, three or four times in the twenty four hours.

Cantharides bear some analogy, in their effects on the urinary organs, to the Balsams and Turpentine, and have been very highly recommended as a remedy for *Leucorrhoea*, by Mr. Robertson of Edinburgh, and cases are related, in which it appears to have produced the best effects. He used the tincture combined with water in the proportion of ʒij or ʒijss , to ʒvj of water, of which a table-spoonful



was given thrice a day. He gradually increased the dose, until the patient had taken ʒij of the tincture in 24 hours, ʒj of the tincture being added to ʒvj of water. It was generally given till considerable pain and puriform discharge from the vagina were produced.

During the use of these remedies the bowels are to be kept regularly loose, with mild laxatives, such as Rhubarb, *asa foetida*, &c.

Together with the use of the above remedies, the following topical applications will be very advantageously employed; *viz*,

Astringent Injections into the Vagina, such as solutions of Acetate of Lead; Infusion of Common Tea; the decoction of *quercus*; infusion of *Corticis granati*; solution of sulphate of Zinc: Solution of Alum, &c. &c.

In cases, where, from the violence of the disease, prolapse of the uterus may be apprehended, the introduction of pessaries, wetted with an astringent solution, or pessaries composed of alum and starch is not to be neglected. They may be withdrawn once or twice a day and again introduced, if the case requires.

The local cold bath is sometimes very usefully employed. It may be applied by sprinkling cold water on the



abdomen and pubis, or applied by means of a wetted sponge.

A Blister applied to the Sacrum, has done much service in some instances.

A plaster of Burgundy Pitch, applied to the back or loins, will generally remove the disagreeable sensations of pain and weakness, which are frequently experienced in these parts.

The parts should be frequently washed with cool water, or milk and water, in order to obviate the acrimony of the discharge, and prevent it from excoriating the surrounding parts. Great attention must, also, be paid, at the same time, to keep the parts as clean as possible. - Where there are excoriations the aqua lythargyri acetati will be found useful as a wash.

During the use of the above remedies, a generous, nutritious and stimulating diet should be enjoined; milk boiled with isinglass; jellies; broths; light meats; eggs; &c. should be freely used as articles of diet. Strict attention should be paid to cleanliness; flannel should be worn next to the skin, particularly in the winter; exposure to vicissitudes of the weather should be avoided; moderate exercise may be taken with advantage, and the feet should be kept perfectly warm and dry.

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